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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001079

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SUBJECT: JUNE 17 MEETING OF THE CIAT WITH THE ESPACE
PRESIDENTIEL

Classified By: Ambassador Roger Meece. Reason 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) Summary: The International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) met with three GDRC Vice Presidents June 17. President Kabila was absent to attend the funeral of his aunt in Lubumbashi. The meeting lasted over four hours, with discussion in some depth covering Transition extension and election issues, military integration and restructuring, the situation regarding the FDLR, and the situation in the northeastern district of Ituri. GDRC officials spelled out both political and security measures being taken to minimize the possibility of violence on June 30. The specifics of election preparations were also covered, including the start of voter registration. Regarding the military, discussion covered familiar topics, including pay and other support to FARDC units. Congolese officials indicated a full deployment plan for newly integrated units has been prepared and should be shared shortly. Regarding Ituri, VP,s Ruberwa and Bemba reported that the GDRC will be adopting extraordinary provisions soon to allow Ituri officials to retain some tax revenues, an overdue measure that will at last enable some local government operations to extend state authority in the district. Discussion of the FDLR is being reported septel. While long, the session represented a productive in-depth discussion in what is by now becoming a regular high-level institutional exchange between the CIAT and the highest levels of the GDRC transition government. End summary.

Transition, Elections, June 30

12. (U) Heads of Mission of the sixteen members of the International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) met with the GDRC Espace Presidentiel June 17. Only three of the GDRC Vice Presidents (Ruberwa, Bemba, Z,Ahidi) were there, as President Kabila and Vice President Yerodia were in Lubumbashi for the funeral of Kabila,s aunt who had been killed a few days earlier. Vice President Ruberwa chaired the meeting in Kabila,s absence. The meeting lasted over four hours, covering a number of current topics in depth.

13. (C) Initial discussion focused on the recently-approved six-month extension to the DRC,s Transition, and the attendant prospects for violent demonstrations arising from the opposition UDPS party calls for an end to existing Transition institutions on June 30. The GDRC officials described political measures being taken to defuse public tension, notably increased public education and communication efforts. As well, security measures being put in place for the June 30 transition anniversary were described in general, with the GDRC officials emphasizing government intentions to use police, not military units, to the maximum extent possible to control potential civic unrest.

14. (C) Voter registration efforts due to start June 20 in Kinshasa were also reviewed. All parties concurred that the operation once underway should also help to convey the message to Kinshasa residents that concrete actions are being taken toward democratic elections. (Note: As reported septels, the voter registration process has moved very well, registering roughly 250,000 voters prior to the June 30 anniversary). Discussion was also devoted to the larger election calendar and needed preparatory actions, including a Constitutional referendum planned for November and a general electoral law. Current planning projects general elections, including local, provincial, legislative, and presidential to be completed by May, 2006. The group also discussed the continuing gap in funding needed for elections. The EU Ambassador reported that the EU is planning to hold a donor meeting July 11 in Brussels to discuss DRC election funding, and hopefully secure additional pledges.

Security Sector Issues

15. (C) Extensive discussion was also devoted to security sector issues, focused on the critically important program of military integration, and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) activities. There were extensive exchanges regarding major further funding and resource needs for training and equipment programs for new integrated army units being formed from former belligerent armies, with South

Africa, Belgium, and Angola taking the lead in pledging continued support. As well, both CIAT members and the GDRC officials reviewed the need to equip - and most critically support - newly integrated units. CIAT members insisted once again on the need for measures to ensure that military troops, particularly those in the integrated units, be paid and supported. Related, the progress of the South Africa-led military census exercise was reviewed. Results reported thus far predictably indicate many fewer actual soldiers than are claimed on the rolls. The report of this exercise, however, appeared to lead to some confusion by VP Ruberwa and other GDRC officials, who appeared uninformed about the South African exercise, and spoke about a parallel internal FARDC census operation. The group resolved to ensure the general topic received further attention in the next Security Joint Commission meeting. All agreed that completion of the census should have an important impact on military salaries, with monies previously earmarked for "phantom" soldiers available for payment to actual troops.

16. (C) CIAT members also expressed strong concern over the lack of a comprehensive FARDC operational plan that would, among other things, set out deployments and missions for new brigades being trained. In response, VP Ruberwa reported that a draft plan has in fact been prepared, although not yet approved by the Supreme Defense Council nor by the Council of Ministers. He expressed the hope that it would be approved and ready to share with international partners soon, perhaps by the next Security Joint Commission meeting. There was also substantial discussion of continuing infrastructure needs at integration centers, progress in associated DDR activities, and deployments out of integration centers of newly-trained units to permit others to begin training.

Ituri District, and the East

17. (C) CIAT Ambassadors expressed dismay at the continuing lag in getting GDRC operations and authority established in Ituri District. To-date there has been little progress seen to provide budget resources for government operations in the District, nor to establish a government presence for border controls or other fundamental functions. VP,s Bemba and Ruberwa reported that measures have been approved that would allow Ituri District government exceptionally to retain a portion of tax revenues for local use, a measure long advocated by CIAT members. (Note: Currently, tax revenues from all sources go into a central fund, with set percentages returned theoretically to provincial authorities, and on to district level government. In practice, Ituri, as with other districts has been receiving almost nothing from the system). CIAT members noted that this step alone could make a major difference in Ituri, and encouraged it to be implemented as quickly as possible.

18. (C) The threat posed by remaining members of Ituri militias also was extensively discussed. While the number of active militia is much less than had been the case several months ago, there are numerous reports from GDRC and MONUC sources that the militia are now equipped with newer and heavier weapons than had been seen previously and seemed to be operating with improved and more aggressive tactics. Both Congolese and various CIAT Ambassadors expressed concerns about potential Ugandan backing and support for the militia, and reports were also noted of apparent continuing free movement of Ituri warlords across the DRC/Uganda border. Related, VP Ruberwa noted that the first integrated FARDC brigade, which has received relatively favorable reviews for its performance in Ituri, continues to lack key equipment, including communications, which would permit it to be more effective.

19. (C) The meeting also included very substantial discussion of the FDLR presence in eastern DRC, the lack of results of the Rome Sant, Egidio initiative, and future steps. The FDLR issue is being addressed septel, which incorporates items discussed in the CIAT/Espace Presidentiel meeting.

Comment: Useful and Now Ongoing Exchange

10. (C) The meeting, while long, represented one of the most substantive exchanges to-date in the series of meetings between the CIAT and the Espace Presidentiel. While the first such meeting held in late 2004 had been extremely difficult to arrange, the sessions have become more regular and appear to be accepted by the Congolese participants as an ongoing part of Transition business. Early sessions were formal and rather strained, but increasingly the sessions represent a real exchange of observations and ideas. End comment.
MEECE